

VLR-5/18/82 NRHP-9/9/82

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
 Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

**1. Name**

historic Federal Hill

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street &amp; number VA Route 623

N/A not for publication

city, town Forest

☒ vicinity of

state Virginia

code 51

county Campbell

code 031

**3. Classification**

**Category**☐ district☒ building(s)☐ structure☐ site☐ object**Ownership**☐ public☒ private☐ both**Public Acquisition**☐ in process☐ being considered

N/A

**Status**☒ occupied☐ unoccupied☐ work in progress**Accessible**☒ yes: restricted☐ yes: unrestricted☐ no**Present Use**☐ agriculture☐ commercial☐ educational☐ entertainment☐ government☐ industrial☐ military☐ museum☐ park☒ private residence☐ religious☐ scientific☐ transportation☐ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Tinsley Carter

street &amp; number Federal Hill

city, town Forest

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 24551

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Campbell County Courthouse

street &amp; number N/A

city, town Rustburg

state Virginia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey  
title Inventory(2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)  
has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1958

☒ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington

state DC

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Federal Hill is a three-part, wood-frame, Palladian-type house built in 1782 in what is now Campbell County. The main block consists of a 2½-story pedimented gable roof flanked by one-story wings. While the original plan remains virtually intact, a nursery and small annex were added to the north wing in the mid-19th century, and a one-story brick kitchen wing was added to the south wing in 1955-56. The present two-tier, pedimented portico is a ca. 1930 rebuilding of an earlier one.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The main entrance to the wood-frame, weatherboarded house is on the west elevation. The entrance consists of the original paneled double doors framed by two-part architrave trim. The entry is sheltered by a two-tier pedimented gable portico that was constructed ca. 1930 to replace an earlier, if not the original, portico. The present portico has round columns, a first- and second-story balustrade with turned balusters, and a dentil and modillion cornice. The pediment's tympanum has a lunette window within a plain frame encased in shiplap siding. A single-door, second-story entrance to the balcony also has a two-part architrave surround. The portico is set on a brick platform that replaces an earlier wooden one. Secondary entrances are found on all the remaining elevations. The single-door entrances have modern multiple-paned-glass and wood-panel doors framed by molded architrave trim. The door (south) leading from the dining room to the kitchen wing was originally an exterior door and retains its original exterior stone step.

The principal fenestration consists of 9/9 hung-sash windows framed by two-part architraves. Some of the windows retain louvred shutters. During the 19th century a "nursery" and annex were added to the north wing. Here, the principal fenestration consists of 6/6 hung-sash windows flanked by louvred shutters. The exterior end chimneys of the north and south wings show extremely well-executed brickwork laid in Flemish bond with rodded mortar joints. The south chimney was altered when the kitchen wing was added in 1955-56. The chimney on the east (rear) elevation is not the original and is inferior in workmanship to the side chimneys.

Federal Hill's plan is inspired by Palladian forms as interpreted in 18th-century English pattern books and is typical of such plans adapted to Virginia three-part houses. The first-floor plan consists of an entry hall that contains the main stair, a rear assembly hall, and a flanking parlor and dining room. The second floor contains bedrooms. The stair is located on the east and south walls of the hall and ascends to the second floor, its flight broken by a landing. The stair has a square newel, turned balusters, and an oval handrail. A wainscot runs along the stair to the second floor. The wainscot is repeated in the entry hall. The door frames in the hall have two-part architrave trim; the doors are paneled. The assembly hall is the most elaborate room in the house. The room has a double-paneled wainscot that features small recessed panels above larger ones and a molded chair rail. A dentiled cornice runs the perimeter of the room. The mantel is Federal in style, having fluted pilasters, a tall frieze, and a cornice shelf. A portrait of James Steptoe in the Bedford County Courthouse may have been painted in this room, as suggested by the treatment of the paneled wainscot in the portrait. The north parlor, now a bedroom, also has a paneled wainscot. The doors and windows are framed by molded architraves. The mantel also has a tall frieze and cornice shelf and

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1782 ; 1772 clerk's office  
 Builder/Architect Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Federal Hill, a tripartite Palladian-type house, is historically significant as the residence of James Steptoe, the second clerk of Bedford County and lifelong friend of Thomas Jefferson. When Steptoe built the house in 1782, Bedford County stood on the cutting edge of Virginia's moving frontier. Fortunately for Steptoe, Jefferson's Bedford County retreat, Poplar Forest, was located only a few miles from Federal Hill, and Jefferson visited with Steptoe whenever he was in the area. Thus, it may have been Jefferson's guiding architectural influence that led Steptoe to adopt Federal Hill's Palladian-derived plan. Such a plan was favored by Jefferson in his first designs for Monticello and continued to be advocated by Jefferson for the residences of friends and associates. Still standing adjacent to the dwelling is the second clerk's office of Bedford County, used by Steptoe throughout his long service to Bedford County.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

James Steptoe (1750-1826), the builder of Federal Hill, was born at Hominy Hall, Westmoreland County, the son of James Steptoe, Sr., a Westmoreland justice of the peace and member of the vestry of Cople Parish. The progenitor of the family in America was Anthony Steptoe who settled on the Northern Neck in Northumberland County in 1697. James Steptoe, Jr., was a contemporary of Thomas Jefferson at the College of William and Mary where the two began a lifelong friendship. On January 17, 1772, Thomas Nelson, Secretary of the Colony, appointed Steptoe as the second clerk of Bedford County, succeeding Benjamin Howard who had served as clerk since the county was formed from Lunenburg in 1753.

On the eve of the American Revolution, Bedford remained a sparsely settled wilderness, lacking the social amenities that Steptoe had enjoyed in the Tidewater region. Consequently, Steptoe's immediate reaction upon his arrival was to seek another appointment in a more settled region. His attempts proved unsuccessful, however, and he remained in Bedford County where he became a respected member of the local community. In 1781 he married Frances Callaway (1760-1807), the daughter of Col. James Callaway (1736-1809), a prominent Bedford County citizen. In the county's history Callaway has been described as "a man of wealth and influence -- a leading citizen of Bedford County, where he lived and died."<sup>1</sup> Marriage must have made life on the frontier more agreeable to Steptoe, since shortly thereafter he was engaged in building a new dwelling house for his bride.

According to the land tax books of Campbell County, formed from Bedford in 1782, Steptoe in 1782 owned 365 acres valued at £ 85.187; in 1783 the same acreage is valued at £187 which suggests a substantial improvement to Steptoe's property and thus the construction of his new residence. In plan Federal Hill consists of a small entrance and stair hall that fronts a larger assembly hall, the two-story center block flanked by one-story wings containing a parlor and dining room. Palladian in inspiration, the plan may have been derived from Robert Morris's Select Architecture, then one of the

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ackerly, Mary, and Parker, Lula. Our Kin. Harrisonburg, Va.: C.J. Carrier Co., 1976.  
Campbell County Land Tax Books, 1782-1826.  
Early, Ruth H. Campbell Chronicles. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1978.  
Johnston, Frederick. Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks. Lynchburg, Va.: J.P. Bell Co., 1888.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 40 acres

Quadrangle name Forest, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7
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6	5	2	2	0	0
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4	1	3	0	6	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

1	7
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6	5	2	3	2	0
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4	1	3	0	5	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	7
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6	5	2	2	0	0
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4	1	3	0	3	5	0
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D 

1	7
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6	5	1	7	8	0
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4	1	3	0	2	0	0
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E 

1	7
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6	5	1	7	6	0
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4	1	3	0	3	6	0
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F 

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6	5	1	9	6	0
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4	1	3	0	7	8	0
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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point on W side of VA 623, about 1,950' NW of intersection with US 460; thence extending about 150' SW to 820' contour, then continuing W along said contour to county line; thence about 1,500' NE along said line; thence about 850' ESE to W side of Va. 623; thence about 750' SE along said side to point of origin. (See Continuation Sheet

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** # 3)

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date May 1982

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date

MAY 18 1982

For HCPRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

APPROVED FOR RELEASE 10-31-84

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

FEDERAL HILL, CAMPBELL COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6,7

Page 1,1

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1967, 1981 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

**7. Description -- Architectural Analysis**

ornamental gouge work that consists of small circles above rectangles. A dentiled cornice similar to that in the assembly hall encircles the room. The dining room has a plain wainscot, topped by a molded chair rail. Like the assembly hall and parlor, a dentil cornice runs the perimeter of the room and a Federal-style mantel ornaments the fireplace. The doors and windows are framed by molded architraves. The woodwork in the nursery is undistinguished.

The second-floor plan consists of two halls running north and south and east and west. The bedchambers are located off the halls and are less elaborate than the first-floor rooms. The halls and bedchambers have wainscoting topped by molded chair rails. The architraves in the hall are similar to those below. The second-floor mantels have plain architrave surrounds topped by handsomely molded shelves.

Located to the south of the main house is an early clerk's office of Bedford County. The office is reputed to have been built in 1772 by James Steptoe after his appointment as the county's second clerk. The office is a 1½-story, wood-frame, weatherboarded building covered by a gable roof. An outstanding feature of the office is its exterior brick chimney which dominates the building's west elevation. The chimney is laid in Flemish bond with rodded joints. The front (north) elevation has a double entrance, the paneled doors sheltered by a 20th-century shed roof. Dating to the 20th century, the fenestration consists of 6/6 hung-sash windows. A small casement window is found near the chimney. To the east of the main house is a smokehouse which was built in the 20th century.

Federal Hill sits on a small hill amidst the gently rolling countryside of Campbell County. The present 100-acre tract of farmland and timberland preserves a sense of the site at the time of its occupation by James Steptoe.

RCC

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

FEDERAL HILL, CAMPBELL COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #2

Item number<sup>8</sup>

Page 1

8. Significance -- Historical Background

more popular Palladian-inspired English builder's guides available in Virginia. An avid disciple of Palladio, Jefferson may also have influenced Steptoe's selection of the plan. In his first plan of Monticello, Jefferson followed the ideas of Palladio whom he often recommended as an architectural source for friends and associates. For example, in a conversation with Isaac Coles in February 1816, Jefferson went so far as to state that Palladio "was the bible," certainly the prime source for his own architecture. Whatever its source Federal Hill is a distinguished wood-frame, Palladian-derived residence.

That Federal Hill is built of wood rather than brick, the material advocated by Jefferson in his Notes, reflects the prodigious amount of virgin timber then available to builders on the frontier. Wood was also employed by Jefferson's friend Joseph Cabell, of Nelson County, when Cabell built his five-part, Palladian-plan residence, Edgewood, in the last quarter of the 18th century. Like Steptoe, Cabell was also a William and Mary alumnus and friend of Jefferson. Since both houses were considerably larger than others built in the same area, it would seem that wealth and prosperity as well as the influence of Palladio played a large part in their isolated construction.

Following the erection of Federal Hill, Steptoe continued to serve his community as both the county clerk and the clerk of the district court for the counties of Bedford, Franklin, Campbell, Pittsylvania, and Henry until 1797. In his Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks, Frederick Johnston wrote of Steptoe:

The character of James Steptoe may be described in a few words -- integrity, independence and the strictest form of Republican simplicity; as to the last of which he seems to have made Mr. Jefferson his model and prototype...As a clerk, he was everything that could be desired; polite and obliging; careful and attentive in the business of his office and in court, and ready at all times to give information and advice to those who needed it.<sup>2</sup>

Among the more famous persons that came to Steptoe for information and advice was the British agronomist William Stickland, who was referred to Steptoe by Jefferson when Stickland traveled through western Virginia on a tour of the United States in 1795.

In 1826, the year of his death, Steptoe had his portrait painted by Harvey Mitchell. Steptoe is seated at his desk, above which hangs an engraved portrait of Jefferson. Behind the seventy-six-year-old clerk is a copy of the Frye-Jefferson map of Virginia. The open window shows a distant view of the Peaks of Otter, once the unsettled wilderness of Steptoe's Bedford County frontier. It is evident from the portrait that Steptoe remained until the end very much the devotee of Jefferson, Federal Hill's most distinguished visitor. Following Steptoe's death, Federal Hill became the property of his eldest son, James C. Steptoe, who also succeeded his father as the clerk of Bedford County for one year. In addition to his son James, Steptoe was survived by four sons and four daughters. His daughter Frances married Henry S. Langhorne from which union came Steptoe's most prominent descendant, Nancy Langhorne, later Vicountess Astor.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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FEDERAL HILL, CAMPBELL COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #3

Item number 8; 1b

Page 2

8. Significance -- Historical Background

Federal Hill continued to be occupied by the Steptoe family until 1850 when it was sold to the Carter family of Fredericksburg, in the hands of whose descendants the house and 100 acres remain. With the adjacent second clerk's office of Bedford County, built ca. 1772 also by James Steptoe, the Federal Hill property is a tangible reminder of the life, work, and friendship of one of the Lower Piedmont's most prominent early citizens.

RCC

<sup>1</sup>Mary Denham Ackerly and Lula E.J. Parker, Our Kin, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Johnston, Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks, p. 77.

10. Geographic Data - Boundary Justification

The nominated property for Federal Hill consists of 40 acres. This includes the main house, smoke house, and the clerk's office. The southern boundary line follows the natural contour line; the western boundary line follows the boundary line between Campbell and Bedford counties; the northern line connects the county line with Route 623, which forms the eastern boundary. The 40 acres are a fraction of the original Federal Hill estate which from 1782 to 1826 consisted of 365 acres. The elevation of the house is preserved within the 40 acres.

